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## Learning to teach

### Part 2: Exploring the distinctive contribution of higher education to teacher education

Edited by Lani Florian and Nataša Pantić, University of Edinburgh





# Contents

Section	Page
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Exploring the distinctive contribution of university-based teacher education</b>	<b>4</b>
Lani Florian and Nataša Pantić, University of Edinburgh	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Research and scholarly engagement in teacher education	5
2.3 Engagement in research as part of teacher education	6
2.4 Teacher education for professional reflection	7
2.5 Teacher education for inclusion and diversity	8
<b>3. Case Study 1 Scholarly-informed teacher education: The University of Cambridge–schools partnership</b>	<b>12</b>
Elaine Wilson, University of Cambridge	12
3.1 Overview	12
3.2 Aims and objectives	13
3.3 Activity	13
3.4 Impact	15
3.5 Next steps/conclusion	16
<b>4. Case Study 2 Scholarly-informed teacher education: Developing reflective practice</b>	<b>18</b>
Ron Smith, Queen's University Belfast	18
4.1 Overview	18
4.2 Aims and objectives	18
4.3 Activity	19
4.4 Impact	20
4.5 Next steps/conclusion	20
<b>5. Case Study 3 Scholarly-informed teacher education: University of Aberdeen inclusive practice project</b>	<b>22</b>
Lani Florian, University of Edinburgh	22
5.1 Overview	22
5.2 Aims and objectives	23
5.3 Activity	23
5.4 Outcome	25
5.5 Impact	25
5.6 Next steps/conclusion	25

# I. Introduction

Teacher education is undergoing a period of rapid change and there is concern across all four countries of the UK that a potential diminution of the role of research-informed teaching in teacher education programmes could impact on the student experience and the quality of the teaching workforce.

As part of the new services being developed by the Higher Education Academy to support strategic development within disciplines, a Social Sciences Teaching and Learning Summit was held in January 2013, at Kents Hill Hotel and Conference Centre, Milton Keynes. This event brought together an expert audience of teacher educators from 35 higher education providers, schools and organisations involved in teacher education from across the four nations to discuss research-informed teacher education and the role of universities in teacher education. A State of the Nations panel was followed by presentations focusing on examples of innovative strategies and practice aimed at maintaining research-informed teacher education. The outcomes of the summit form the basis of this publication and inform the strategic direction for HEA-sponsored projects on teacher education for 2013/14.

Part I of the publication, which can be downloaded from <http://bit.ly/1d4Pj7l>, comprises of the four papers that were presented by the State of the Nations panel, the focus of the summit. John Furlong discusses teacher education as part of 'the university project'. Sharon Gewirtz argues the need for developing teachers as scholar-citizens. Olwen McNamara and Jean Murray discuss the implications of the School Direct programme for research-informed teacher education and teacher educators. Geoff Whitty discusses teacher education and research in higher education institutions in England.

This part of the publication explores the distinctive contribution of university-based teacher education. In this section, key themes identified during the HEA summit on university-based teacher education are discussed within the parameters set by the State of the Nations papers. It synthesises the key points and comments on the themes identified at the summit, drawing on relevant international literature. The commentary discusses three areas of higher education's distinctive contribution to teacher education, including research and scholarly engagement, professional reflection, and preparation for inclusion and diversity. It also serves to introduce three case studies, which illustrate some of the work currently underway at higher education institutions in the UK in each of these areas.

## 2. Exploring the distinctive contribution of university-based teacher education

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### 2.1 Introduction

The State of the Nations papers on university-based teacher education provide a broad outline and set some important parameters around the problems, opportunities and challenges facing teacher education in the countries of the UK. Furlong argues that as the site for the contestability of knowledge, university-based teacher education is (should be) based on a process of generating and assessing evidence, and challenging and contesting assumptions. Gewirtz points out that universities are sites of disciplinary knowledge that offer spaces for teachers' reflection and critical questioning of accepted ways of doing things, developing their own independent views on alternatives based on the theoretical perspectives and systematic ways of thinking. McNamara and Murray elaborate on these ideas, suggesting that the preparation of teachers is neither a 'craft' nor an 'intellectual' activity, but instead a combination of these activities which work together 'to inculcate an inquiry stance: employing critical thinking skills; problematising dominant discourses and practices; and reflecting on experiential knowledge and how it relates to practical theory.' Whitty calls for the development of guidelines on research-based teacher education.

In this section, key themes identified during the HEA summit on university-based teacher education are discussed within the parameters set by the State of the Nations papers and a synthesis of some additional literature on these topics is provided. The aim of this section is to add further detail to the discussions initiated by the State of the Nations papers that might help to identify and target areas for future research. To this end, distinctions are made between research-informed teacher education, engagement in research as part of teacher education, and research on teacher education.

In the following sections, four themes identified during the HEA summit on university-based teacher education are discussed. These are:

- access and engagement with scholarly and disciplinary literature and knowledge/participation in the scholarly communities;
- the questioning of accepted ways of doing things, developing independent views on alternatives based on the theoretical perspectives and systematic ways of thinking;
- the space and time for reflection away from the busyness of school; and
- the role that higher education can play in supporting the development of new practice in response to the changing world in which we live.

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“the role of higher education institutions is to help student teachers take a research stance in their teaching as a way of valuing their experiences and building upon them.”

Florian and Pantić

These themes are discussed relative to three topics believed to capture and reflect the distinctive contribution of university-based teacher education to preparing teachers for the demands of today's schools. These are: (1) research and scholarly engagement in teacher education; (2) teacher education for professional reflection; and (3) teacher education for inclusion and diversity. A brief overview of each topic is followed by a case study illustrating some of the ways in which different UK universities are responding to these challenges.

## 2.2 Research and scholarly engagement in teacher education

Studies examining the factors that contribute to high-achieving systems of schooling have found that the quality of teachers is an important factor in educational achievement (OECD 2005; Mourshed, Chijoke and Barber 2010). Subsequently there have been debates in many countries about how to improve teacher quality. As Furlong (2013) notes, reforms have focused on improving both the quality of entrants into the teaching profession and the quality of teacher education itself. Two themes identified during the HEA summit on university-based teacher education are thought to be particularly relevant to questions about quality in university-based programmes of teacher education because they reflect the distinctive contribution that university-based teacher education makes to teacher quality. These are:

- access and engagement with scholarly and disciplinary literature and knowledge/participation in the scholarly communities;
- questioning of accepted ways of doing things, developing their own independent views on alternatives based on the theoretical perspectives and systematic ways of thinking.



Evidence from around the world indicates that the most effective teachers combine practical skills with the ability to understand and use research and other evidence for developing their teaching (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1993, 1999). In other words, they are highly skilled reflective practitioners. Yet sufficient long-term, large-scale studies of how teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions for teaching have not yet been systematically undertaken within teacher education research. Reasons for this include the difficulties

in conceptualising these areas for research purposes and the lack of sustained investment in programmes of research on teacher education that would enable the necessary theoretical and empirical work on these questions to be undertaken.

Indeed, teacher education research has been described as a relatively young field that lacks a unifying theoretical structure (Cochran-Smith and Zeichner 2005). Over the past 50 years, research on teacher preparation has moved from looking primarily at teacher characteristics to the study of teachers' behaviour, decision-making, knowledge, reflection and dispositions. More recently, there have been moves towards more sophisticated research on teacher education but the sheer array of programmes of varying length, consisting of different components, entry requirements, qualification and degrees awarded, and so forth, means that deeper understanding of the connections between how teachers are prepared and their behaviour, decision-making, knowledge, reflection and dispositions will take time. Nevertheless, as Grossman and McDonald (2008) have argued, to overcome gaps in the knowledge base underpinning teacher education, there is a need to understand better the connections between the candidate enrolled in teacher education programmes and research on teaching. To this end, it is helpful to make distinctions between research-informed teacher education and engagement in research as part of teacher education.

## Research-informed teaching and teacher education

Teacher education programmes are designed to prepare teachers for a career in teaching and it is expected that programme graduates will be teaching for many years after their professional education. In this context, research-informed teacher education implies more than the application of research evidence generated within the academic disciplines that traditionally inform teacher education programmes, such as Sociology, Psychology, history of education and Philosophy. As beginning teachers quickly learn, the 'what works' recipes offered by research do not work for all teachers, or with all classes and on all occasions for any one teacher. Using evidence about learning, teaching and schooling is not a straightforward matter of applying research findings to teaching.

Evidence offered by research is often inconclusive and may point to different directions. The development of teacher expertise, therefore, involves being able to engage critically and justify pedagogical decisions and, as Hargreaves (2007) has noted, using research evidence is one way by which teachers may integrate knowing 'what and how' with knowing 'why'. In addition, questions need to be asked about which research and how research can and should inform teacher education to achieve the kinds of effective partnership envisaged by McNamara and Murray.

As noted above, combining practical skills with the ability to understand and use research and other evidence for developing teaching practice not only defines reflective practice, which is discussed more fully in the following section, but also is a foundation of teacher education. The problem is that it has been inherently difficult to demonstrate successful teacher education for reflective practice because reflection does not necessarily lead directly to changes in practice. A recent review on teacher reflection (Marcos et al. 2011) found little agreement about what might count as evidence of reflective practice. Attempts to capture the characteristics of reflective practitioners in the Netherlands (Korthagen et al. 1995: 66) identified the following characteristics:

- ability to structure situations and problems;
- the use of a questioning approach when evaluating experience (e.g., why did this happen?);
- clarity about what they want to learn (i.e., are independent learners);
- the ability to describe and analyse experience and interaction well.

But as noted above, studies of the contextual factors that shape teachers' practices are scant and insufficient work has been done to achieve the theoretical coherence needed to drive research forward. The consensus about programme elements such as enhanced 'clinical preparation' emerging from debates about the development of high-quality teachers is based on investigations into the common characteristics of teacher education programmes in countries that achieve well on international comparisons of achievement (e.g. OECD 2011), or the characteristics of teacher education programmes with reputations for producing high-quality teachers (Darling-Hammond 2006). More research on teacher education programmes is needed to deepen understanding of how teacher education programmes can be organised both in terms of content and structure so that teachers are well prepared to question accepted ways of doing things, and are sustained in developing independent views on alternatives based on the theoretical perspectives and systematic ways of thinking. As Furlong has argued, the university, as a site for the contestability of knowledge, is a good location for this work.

### 2.3 Engagement in research as part of teacher education

There are two important aspects to the notion of engagement in research as part of university-based teacher education. The first is student-focused and programmatic; it pertains to developing programmes of teacher education that prepare student teachers to undertake practitioner research as part of their professional practice. The second is focused on teacher educators and the extent to which they can and should reconcile the academic demand of the university where they work as scholars who undertake their own research with the practical demands of professional and governmental bodies that require new teachers to be prepared by qualified teachers who may or may not be qualified researchers.



Student teacher engagement in systematic inquiry has become a well-established part of teacher education and professional development programmes. For example, at the University of Wisconsin, Zeichner and Liston (1987) encouraged student teachers to engage in systematic inquiry into the 'origins, purposes, and consequences of their actions as well as [into] the material and ideological constraints and encouragements embedded in classroom, school and societal contexts in which they work' (Zeichner and Liston 1987: 23–4). The opportunities for access to and engagement with disciplinary knowledge offered by the scholarly communities of university-based programmes is widely believed to have a powerful influence on how teachers think and feel about their teaching and position themselves as agents of systemic change (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1993, 1999). In this context the role of university-based programmes is to enable student teachers to undertake practitioner research, bringing a research stance to their own teaching as a formative process of valuing and building upon their experiences.

In the UK, teacher educators are qualified teachers, many of whom have also been prepared in the tradition of practitioner-researchers, but may or may not see themselves as qualified researchers. While they often undertake research on their teaching, it is often viewed as internal formative evaluation research, and like practitioner research conducted by teachers, is not seen as making a significant contribution to knowledge about teaching. As discussed in the State of the Nations papers, it often is not considered as meeting the standard of academic research as defined by the UK's Research Excellence Framework.

What is important to note is that 'engagement in research as part of teacher education' is a phrase with meanings at many levels. While research on teacher education is needed to inform the development of teacher education programmes, engagement in research remains an important part of the content of teacher education. In this context the role of higher education institutions is to help student teachers take a research stance in their teaching as a way of valuing their experiences and building upon them. Engagement in research is also an element of the work that teacher educators routinely undertake with varying degrees of success and possibly opportunity in terms of academic quality, publication and impact.

## 2.4 Teacher education for professional reflection

Since Dewey's observation that we do not learn from experience, but from reflecting on experience (Dewey 1933), the importance of reflectivity for teaching has been recognised and extensively discussed in teacher education literature. Seminal works of John Dewey (1933), Donald Schön (1983, 1987), Kenneth Zeichner (2006) and others make a strong case for thinking about teaching as a reflective, rather than routine, practice because



reflective practice involves linking teaching and education with their wider purposes in contexts, rather than a straightforward application of theories to defined problems. Studies of the value of reflection to teachers who continued to use it in their practice found that they have: strong feelings of personal security and self-efficacy; better interpersonal relationships with pupils and colleagues than other teachers; that they have developed a higher degree of job satisfaction and are less likely to experience burnout (Korthagen and Wubbels 1995; Korthagen et al. 2001).

Consequently, teacher reflection has become common currency in discussions of desirable teacher characteristics, related policies and ways of preparing teachers as 'reflective practitioners'. The HEA summit identified two themes of particular resonance with the idea of the teacher as a reflective practitioner:



- questioning of accepted ways of doing things, developing their own independent views on alternatives based on the theoretical perspectives and systematic ways of thinking;
- the space and time for reflection away from the busy-ness of school.

Preparing teachers for critical reflection involves questioning the preconceptions implicit in the process, purposes and intentions of education, teaching and schooling, in turn raising social, political and cultural issues that often challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions upon which policies and practices are based. Moreover, without a reflective capacity to articulate the moral and ethical implications of professional practice, teachers are vulnerable to the cultural routines and rituals of schooling that tend to sustain rather than challenge some of the prevailing beliefs about teaching and learning based on preconceptions and myths (McIntyre 2005). For these reasons, student teachers' reflection on experience is widely believed to be transformative in terms of improving practice. However, as Eraut (1995) points out, time and space in which preconceptions about teaching can be safely challenged are needed.

Universities have traditionally been seen as supportive environments for the development of critical reflection because of their physical distance from the school (Korthagen et al. 2001), the more systematised and abstract knowledge of university tutors (Griffiths 2000) and the tensions that school-based reflection might involve, for example, finding time in the school schedule, and so forth. University-based teacher education aims to make student-teachers' preconceptions explicit and assist them in 'reframing' their conceptions of teaching by providing suitable new experiences (via partnerships with schools that enable supported and structured school experiences) and opportunities for reflection, starting with a non-threatening evaluation of experience away from school (Korthagen et al 2001). Making preconceptions about teaching and learning explicit is believed to help student teachers to understand their attitudes, beliefs and orientations to learning, and begin the transformation of personal experience into professional knowledge (Griffiths 2000).

The central role of reflection in teachers' work is mirrored in a conceptualisation of teaching as an activity that involves many specific situations that do not occur as defined problems (Schön 1983). As a result, opportunities to make the professional craft knowledge of practising teachers explicit through reflection is considered necessary for making it transferable and for challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and preconceptions about learning (McIntyre 2005). As Korthagen (op cit) has stressed, reflecting on practice can be an important mechanism for counteracting the socialising processes of school. In partnership with schools, university-based teacher education programmes aim to help student teachers articulate their tacit knowledge and intuitive decision-making in the form of reasoned arguments for acting in certain ways, and to reflect on their practice in order to learn from experience.

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Florian and Pantić

## 2.5 Teacher education for inclusion and diversity

In Britain as elsewhere, classroom teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching a diverse range of learners whose differences vary across many dimensions. The enlargement of the European Union (EU) has seen a new wave of immigrants from the accession states of Eastern and South Eastern Europe joining those from other members of the EU and from former British colonies in the Caribbean and South Asia to live and work in Britain. While regional variations remain substantial and the majority of immigrants tend to be concentrated in urban areas, there has been an increase in East European migrants moving to rural areas to work in agriculture and farming. Today, 14 per cent of the British population are from a minority ethnic group, an increase of six per cent from the 2001 census. Clearly the HEA summit focus on 'the role that higher education can play in supporting the development of new practice in response to the changing world in which we live' is key to innovation and the reform of teacher education.

The increasing number of students from minority ethnic groups along with the trend to provide for students with special educational needs in mainstream schools means that classroom teachers should expect to teach groups of students whose differences will vary across many dimensions – cultural, developmental, linguistic, and religious. However, classroom teachers often report that they do not feel adequately prepared for the job. Indeed, a 2008 Ofsted report found that teachers are not well prepared to teach students with special educational needs, a group that represents nearly 20 per cent of the total-school age population. Moreover, many schools still struggle to achieve good social and academic outcomes for students from disadvantaged groups.

It is little wonder that calls for reform in teacher education have been linked to dissatisfaction with student performance and poor outcomes, particularly relating to the long tale of underachievement of specific groups such as students from certain ethnic minorities, those living in poverty, or those who may have additional needs associated with disability or language. Concerns about the persistent underachievement of particular groups of students have now been extended to the role of teacher education and the role that it can play in ‘narrowing the achievement gap’ for particular groups.

While teacher education certainly has an important role to play in how well prepared new teachers feel for the challenges of today’s schools and classrooms, little is known about the professional knowledge base needed to prepare teachers for the challenges of today’s schools, and consequently there is little consensus on how best to achieve this outcome. A recent special issue of the *Journal of Teacher Education* (Pugach, Blanton and Florian 2012) suggests that equipping teachers for full range of diversity of students in today’s schools requires a new conversation within teacher education to identify and articulate what is needed to advance teacher education in ways that are responsive to the full range of diversity of students, and that takes account of the multiple markers of identity that characterise both individuals and groups.

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Florian and Pantić

Research on the processes of teacher education is relatively recent and fragmented. In concluding their state-of-the-field review of teacher education, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) called upon Government agencies and foundations to make a strategic investment in research on teacher education. If teacher education is to respond to the current calls for reform based on concerns that teachers are not adequately prepared to address the problem of educational underachievement, then research on reform in teacher education is needed.

The demand for more inclusive education, based on the changing demographic of schooling and the principle that schools should provide for all children, regardless of any perceived difference, disability, or other social, emotional, cultural or linguistic difference, clearly calls for a form of teacher education that has yet to be developed. The current standard practice of requiring a course in multiculturalism or special needs education, or ‘infusing’ this content into existing courses, has tended to add to, rather than change, much of the existing content in initial teacher education. If problems of inequality are thought to be structurally linked to teacher education and teacher professional learning, issues pertaining to how well teachers are prepared, and the role they can play in reducing educational inequalities, must be systematically addressed by programmes of research that can help determine a knowledge base for the reforms that are needed.

Teachers need to be prepared to respond with sensitivity and skill to the many demands that learners from diverse communities present. Research designed to explore questions about the knowledge and skills needed for teachers to be inclusive in their practice, and the associated implications for teacher education, is needed. This line of research is distinguished by a focus on the content of teacher education rather than the process but, as noted above, research on both aspects of teacher education is needed. Teacher education reforms that are responsive to the changing demographic of schooling combine to present a clear case for what Hudson (2011) has identified as the central place of research and higher education in the professional education of teachers. Research on the process and content of teacher education is needed and, as the site where the contestability of knowledge is comfortably located, the university is ideally situated to undertake the necessary research.

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### 3. Case Study I Scholarly-informed teacher education: The University of Cambridge–schools partnership

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The distinctive contribution of higher education to preparing teachers to facilitate learning

#### 3.1 Overview

Teacher knowledge is both explicit and tacit in form (Eraut 2002). Explicit, codified academic knowledge is the accumulated propositional knowledge stored in texts, databases, studentship, scholarship, research and cultural practices of teaching. This sort of explicit knowledge is about intellectual development and progressing through a hierarchy leading to greater levels of abstraction and a deeper understanding of a substantive area of knowledge. The other form of knowledge is practice-based tacit teacher knowledge. Tacit knowledge of teaching is context-specific and difficult to make explicit, although there are published texts which attempt to distil this into ‘tips for teachers’-style books. Tacit knowledge of teaching is largely acquired informally through participation in authentic classrooms, through guided positive learning experiences. Our experience as a long-established initial teacher education provider shows that new teachers need both practice and theoretical knowledge (McIntyre 2005; Wilson and Demetriou 2007).

Making sense of classrooms from a teacher’s perspective is a sophisticated process, involving understanding how deliberative decision-making is carried out, something which is not always apparent to an untrained observer. This deliberative approach (Table 1) is based on a deep understanding of a number of interrelated aspects of the specific classroom. These include knowledge of the pedagogical approaches best suited to teaching the curriculum area, a good understanding of the contextual features of the specific classroom, and detailed knowledge of the students and what motivates them to learn.

Tacit Judgements	Reactive Judgements	Deliberative Judgements
‘Hot’ action	Judgements linked to actions and the classroom environment	‘Cooler’ action
Judgements based on intuition		Judgements based on deep understanding
Mainly emotional responses	Respond to affective and social contexts	Cognitive domains also involved
Knowledge <i>in</i> action		Knowledge <i>for</i> action
‘Act’ like a teacher	Knowledge <i>of</i> action	‘Think’ like a teacher

Table 1: Teacher judgements

Becoming an expert teacher is a transformative process rather than simply the acquisition of skills. It is about 'growing capacity to make appropriate judgements in changing, and often unique circumstances' (Beckett and Hager 2000: 302) and involves learning how to bridge the gap between the state of mind of the learner and the subject matter which is to be learnt.

Although this can be done through questioning expert teachers, and through reflecting on and in classrooms, teaching requires cognisance of how to bring about learning: choose activities that are relevant to the kind of learning to be brought about and ensure that activities are relevant to the state of mind and motivation of the learner. In other words, it requires both practical and theoretical knowledge. This case study reports on how a university–schools-based partnership course links practical knowledge and research knowledge and considers how working in such a partnership can enhance new teacher learning.

### 3.2 Aims and objectives

This case study reports on the findings of a social network analysis study that aimed to investigate the interactions taking place in the Cambridge University–schools partnership (Wilson 2013).

### 3.3 Activity

#### The Cambridge model of university–school-based partnership

The Cambridge model of university–school-based partnership was set up in the early nineties and was based on the Oxford Internship Scheme which had demonstrated the immense power of involving schools, individual school departments and university-based education in a stable training model (McIntyre 1990). At the time of writing there are approximately 450 students enrolled on the Early Years and Primary and Secondary PGCE courses.

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“effective initial teacher education depends on close relationships between schools and university departments and...neither the school nor the university can work successfully without the other. Our experience suggests that rather than privileging school-based routes for entry into the teaching profession, there is a powerful case for placing partnership on a more formal footing to provide a coherent focus.”

Wilson

The University has developed close working relations with around 200 primary and 50 secondary schools in the region. In partner schools, teacher education depends on ‘mentors’ who are classroom teachers trained by the University department to provide support to novices during their practicum in school. The training provided and the experience gained through taking part in conversations about professional practice are considered to be highly prestigious by schools, and those who hold the mentoring posts use the experience to further their careers. Furthermore, seconded participation in a University department by an experienced and successful teacher is recognised by both the University department and school to be a valuable learning experience which ultimately furthers the understanding of teaching and learning within a school. Other successful international models of university–school-based teacher education reported in a 2012 OECD report (Schleicher 2012) show that effective initial teacher education depends on close relationships between schools and university departments and that neither the school nor the university can work successfully without the other. Our experience suggests that rather than privileging school-based routes for entry into the teaching profession, there is a powerful case for placing partnership on a more formal footing to provide a coherent focus.

#### Social network analysis

Social network analysis is based on an assumption that participants and their actions are interdependent. Relational ties or linkages act as channels for the flow of resources and ideas between the participants in the network. Two types of network map, focus group interviews with school-based teachers and written communications over an academic year have been used to analyse interactions within the partnership.



## Network maps

The network linkages were analysed using two types of network map (Fox et al. 2007, 2011). The university–school network boundaries were mapped on a whole network map (see Figure 1). The nodes show the density of teachers who have been educated by the Cambridge partnership team and now have teaching posts in Science departments within the network. Indeed, 40% of the schools have five or more former Cambridge students who are members of the Science department staff. The arrows show the direction of flow of ideas and resources and show that 30% of the schools actively contribute to the faculty-based programme. There are also two clusters of schools working together to provide a common programme for novices.

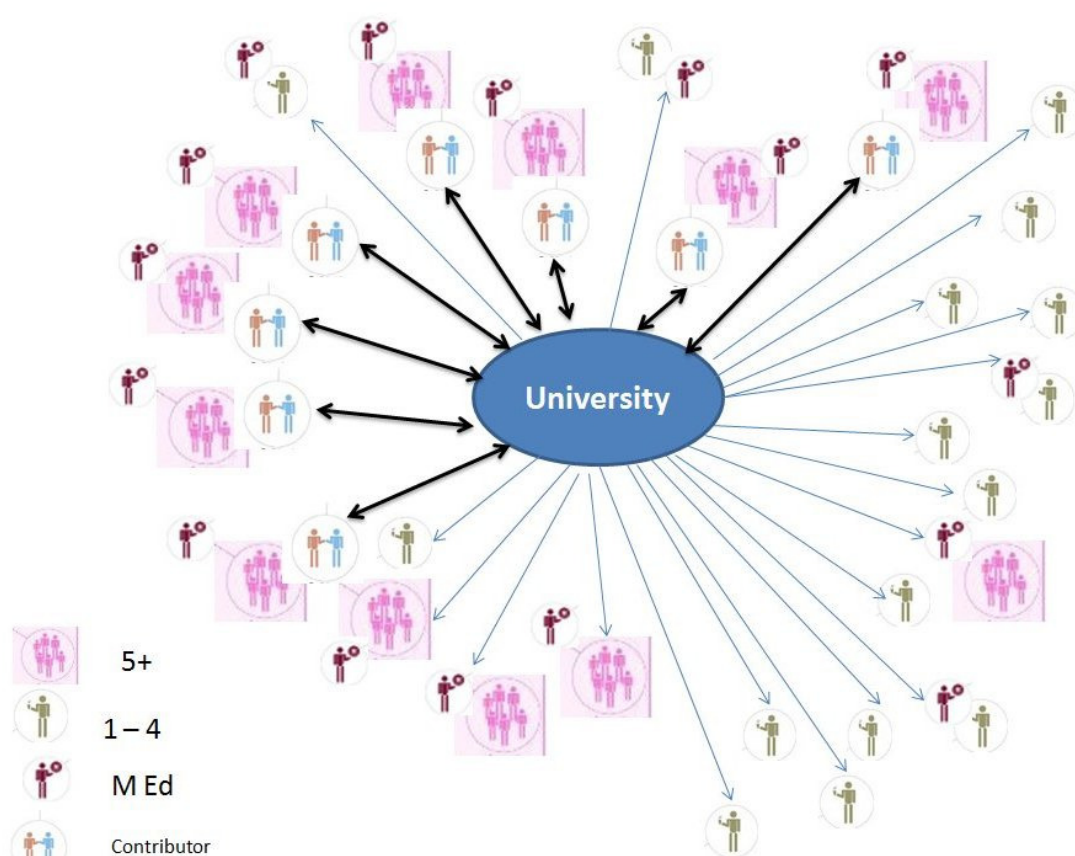


Figure 1: Whole network map

Two further interesting findings emerged from this mapping exercise. First, 65% of the school-based mentors who work with novices during their school-based practicum have also been educated on the Cambridge course. This 'reserve' of cognitive social capital reinforces the work of the partnership and ensures that common values and principles are shared explicitly between the school and University department. Second, 60% of the school Science departments have one or more former Cambridge Science MEd students working in the department. This ensures that new context-specific research knowledge and practice is being actively developed in partner schools. Furthermore, these Masters-qualified teachers are assisting novice teachers with their school-based research projects.

Consequently, there has been a marked shift in attitudes among school-based teachers towards supporting this school-based research element of the course. Over the years, the values within the partnership have shifted markedly to accept that classroom-based research is an important part of developing classroom practice.

### 3.4 Impact

The table below summarises the different and complementary roles taken by both University and schools in the education of new teachers.

Across the school–university partnership new teachers are able to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access both research and practice knowledge, and receive instruction in effective ways of teaching all learners in all classrooms;</li> <li>• work within a collegial teacher learner community with support networks among peers, expert teachers and subject lecturers;</li> <li>• have access to contrasting school experiences during initial teacher education (ITE);</li> <li>• acquire a recognised Masters level qualification as well as Qualified Teacher Status.</li> </ul> <p>Furthermore the school- and University-based education programme extends social capital through each partner providing unique but complementary structural, pedagogical and social support.</p>		
Structural support	Pedagogical support	Social support
University contribution		
<p>The opportunity to work with internationally recognised teacher educators and researchers.</p> <p>Access to up-to-date recent developments in subject knowledge</p> <p>Access to the most recent relevant educational research.</p>	<p>Support to make thoughtful, deliberative judgements, so that new teachers will be able to solve problems in the future in response to unique classrooms.</p> <p>Contribution to the generation of practice–research knowledge about learning in classrooms during ITE.</p> <p>Continued development of knowledge-building through a second year of MEd degree programme during the early careers stage.</p>	<p>Sustained pastoral support during the first few, potentially difficult, years of teaching, beyond initial teacher education.</p>
School contribution		
<p>Provision for novices to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of teaching in a range of classrooms.</p> <p>Time to think about practice in authentic classrooms.</p>	<p>Engage in professional conversations about authentic classroom practice.</p> <p>Support from expert school-based mentors who have been trained by the University and share the common partnership values of constantly striving to improve the learning of students in classrooms.</p> <p>Support to take risks and be innovative in the classroom.</p>	<p>Support from expert teachers in applying and preparing for interviews and first teaching posts.</p>

Table 2: What novice teachers say they learn and where this takes place.

### 3.5 Next steps/conclusion

There are a number of advantages to being part of a university–school partnership. First, university departments are ideally placed to help build social capital with and between school partners. This can take the form of improving and developing teachers' subject knowledge. Universities can provide access to real experts in the field who can work with science educators, novices and school-based teachers to make recent ideas accessible and available in school classrooms.

Second, collaborative relationships between schools and university departments are underpinned by a shared understanding of how research knowledge and practice knowledge intersect to inform practice about, for example, helping new teachers to engage pupils in learning how to learn. Effective teachers are constantly called upon to make deliberative judgements about practice. This is learned best when experienced in both a school and a university. For example, learning in the university about the latest ideas as to how children learn and then finding out in the school how to teach specific students in particular classroom, new teachers can develop practice and research knowledge through undertaking small-scale school-based research guided by university staff.

Third, university-school partnerships are able to set up opportunities for novices to hone their practice in different schools. At Cambridge novices benefit from two major practicum experiences in at least two very different schools. Furthermore, the opportunity and time to reflect upon practice between placements may help the novice to develop thinking about practice, as there is little time to reflect and think on-the-job. Additionally, working collaboratively with groups of schools and university departments cultivates a sense of identity where novices feel secure, supported and trusted which would go a long way to helping to retain more teachers in classrooms.

Finally, teacher education institutions also serve as key change agents in transforming education and society. Not only do such institutions educate new teachers, update the knowledge and skills of existing teachers, create teacher-education curricula, provide professional development for practising teachers, contribute to textbook production and consult with local schools, they often also provide expert advice to national and international ministries of education. Because of this broad influence on curriculum design and implementation, as well as policy setting within educational institutions, faculty members of teacher education institutions are perfectly poised to promote teacher education in the longer term. Indeed it could be argued that short term policy responses based on perceived teacher shortages in urban areas might jeopardise existing good practice. By working with faculties of teacher education institutions, governments might be better placed to bring about systematic, economically effective change.

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## 4. Case Study 2 Scholarly-informed teacher education: Developing reflective practice

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The distinctive contribution of higher education to the development of reflective practitioners

### 4.1 Overview

In 2008, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) set out its understanding of the nature of teaching and the competencies that underpinned it. In *Teaching the reflective profession*, the GTCNI articulated its conviction that teaching should never be reduced to a set of discrete skills that have to be mastered in some mechanical process of assimilation. On the contrary, the hallmark of the Council's approach was to emphasise an ethical and value-based view of teacher professionalism and professional identity. Successful teachers are seen as not only technically proficient, but 'also capable and willing to, for example, look at their experience, make sense of it, identify what to do in future practice, and be concerned with the purposes and consequences of education' (2008: 5). The Council suggested that in discharging their responsibilities, teachers needed to recognise that it was in the interaction between mission, ethical understanding and professional knowledge that good teaching was to be found. Later in this same document, in the section 'Reflective and activist teacher', the Council reiterated its determination to ensure that novice teachers graduating from Northern Irish higher education would be knowledgeable, skilful and reflective practitioners who, individually and collectively, were able to reflect on the nature and purposes of education and be informed critics of educational proposals and reforms. This case study reports on how one university-based provider meets this challenge.

### 4.2 Aims and objectives

The GTCNI stance on teacher professionalism as an ethical and value-based activity draws upon Dalmau and Gudjonsdottir's (2002) articulation of the roles that professional educators embrace. These include:

- pedagogues and experts in teaching and learning;
- activist teachers who are committed to professional dialogue in collaboration with colleagues, in schools and beyond;
- reflective and critical problem-solvers who continuously monitor pupils' progress and learning within the classroom and reflect both as individuals and as communities of practice on their practice and pupil progress;
- researchers and change agents who, in seeking a deeper understanding of their practice, or in seeking to plan for change, use a variety of evaluation and action research techniques to collect and interpret findings to inform their thinking and decision making;
- creators of knowledge- and theory-builders who, in the process of reflective practice and action research, develop new understandings of learning, teaching and educational change.

It is with these roles in mind that the current secondary PGCE at the School of Education, Queen's University Belfast, was designed. The course consists of three integrated modules consisting of education studies, practical teaching and subject methods (Science, Mathematics, English, Modern Languages, Social Science, Religious Education and Irish Medium Education). The course consists of 24 weeks of school-based experiences and 12 weeks' reflective university-based tuition. A key aim of the course is to prepare teachers who meet the standards set by Dalmau and Gudjonsdottir's articulation of teacher professionalism.

The development of reflective practice is at the heart of this modular programme and a range of strategies have been adopted to meet this objective, for example:

- the formative profile and career entry profiling processes;
- reflective tasks that are built into methods work;
- the opportunities provided for both self- and peer-evaluation in micro-teaching;
- the reflection on practice that underpins the lesson-planning process;
- the reflection on practice processes that take place between the tutors and students during teaching practice;
- reflective thinking and writing are an essential requirement of assessed course work elements and assignments designed to satisfy Masters-level criteria;
- the general studies assignment that requires students to make critically reflective connections between their ideas about effective teaching-learning and their practice in schools.

This general approach to developing reflective dispositions and practices is supplemented by specific activities located within the different subject method and optional programmes. However, despite the combined nature of school- and university-based elements of the course, few strategies exist to support the secondary teachers who become supervisors of school-based practice. The activity reported below describes an innovative small-scale research project that aimed to introduce academic writing as a professional-development activity for a small group of teachers who worked as school-based tutors for both student teachers and teachers during the early professional-development stage (Dolan, Harford and McClune 2012).

### 4.3 Activity

When secondary teachers become supervisors of school-based experience on an initial teacher education (ITE) programme, they bring their experience as teachers to bear on new teaching practice. Through reflection on their own teaching experiences, they offer the student teacher advice that helps the student teacher to develop their craft. However, as yet, within the Irish context, no formal programmes or strategies exist to support how supervisors structure or restructure the actions, beliefs, knowledge and theories that inform their supportive practices for the purposes of professional development. There is, nonetheless, an international trend towards self-study of teacher education practice (S-STEP), where teacher educators are encouraged to both reflect upon and write for publication about their practices.

Over the course of the academic year 2011/12, two groups of supervisors formed for the purpose of exploring the role of writing as a professional-development activity. The group at Queen's University Belfast were teachers in schools who also worked as school-based tutors to student teachers completing their PGCE. The group had a facilitator who was a member of the University academic staff. The group also had a critical friend. A second group was located at another university.

Both groups followed a programme of activities over the course of the year. The activities were designed to engage the participants in reading and writing about their practice as teacher educators and to share their writing with one another. A number of meetings were held between November 2011 and June 2012. Prior to each meeting, participants were invited to write between 500 and 1,000 words on a particular topic and to bring this to the meeting. The structure of each meeting was as follows:

- each participant shared his/her writing with the group, either by distributing a photocopy of the piece or by reading it aloud;
- the written pieces were discussed, with participants invited to comment on similarities and differences between them;
- following the discussion, the key points were summarised and noted; this formed the basis of the report of the meeting;



- the meeting concluded by setting the focus for the next month.

Some meetings were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants and, following the meeting, a participant undertook to write the report and circulate it to the members of the group.

The writing themes included:

- writing a journal about the everyday practices of supervising school placements;
- engaging in conversation about practice with a critical friend who does not work in teacher education;
- writing one's thoughts on one's autobiography as a learner;
- critical incidents as a school placement tutor/supervisor;
- writing a case study of an incident.

Participants were also provided with a selection of readings that related to the emergent themes from the written pieces. After the series of meetings was completed, participants were invited to evaluate their involvement in the process to date.

#### **4.4 Impact**

The research on supporting practising teachers who were supervising PGCE students to become reflective practitioners has been highly encouraging. Initial findings have drawn attention to:

- The benefits of journal-keeping as a way of increasing one's self-realisation. This activity allowed participants to identify preconceived notions or assumptions about students and schools;
- The significance of the study group culture as a motivational factor for critical reflection;
- The way in which the process assisted the participants in increasing a sense of interconnectedness with the ITE programme, thus reducing the sense of isolation that had developed in the supervision role;
- The fact that the process was instrumental in causing supervisors to change their practices. One supervisor described adopting a more analytical approach to observation, resulting in feedback that was more measured and focused.

#### **4.5 Next steps/conclusion**

This work continues in the current academic term. It is however only one of a number of collaborative teacher education for reflective practice research projects that have been undertaken by PGCE tutors at the School of Education. Other innovative projects are also being developed as a result of the encouraging experiences here. Recently, the Science department has also been involved in a collaborative reflective practice project, with student teachers in the USA (PGCE PoDCaSTers: a collaborative NI-US project). Last year's PGCE Science students and their counterparts in Austin Peay State University, Tennessee, understood that this was an acronym for 'Podcasting to Develop Crucial Skills for Teaching'.

In this project, students worked in small production teams. Each group focused on a key teaching skill fundamental to classroom success, for example explaining, questioning, assessment for learning, etc. Informed by relevant reading, by their university-based lectures and by their reflection on their own early teaching experiences, the students prepared thematic podcasts. As the students struggled to transform their developing ideas into an interesting and instructive podcast, they deepened their understanding of the issues involved. When completed, the

outcomes were made available to other students and were peer-reviewed by representatives from each group. Most striking were the similarities between the podcasts produced in the two universities

University staff and supervisors have been very encouraged by these activities. A number of students went on to produce podcasts with their pupils on their second school placement, in some cases introducing staff in the host Science departments to new practices. As staff become more actively engaged in developing their own reflective practices, possibilities for new – and potentially powerful – synergies between teaching and teaching teachers are developing.

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## 5. Case Study 3 Scholarly-informed teacher education: University of Aberdeen inclusive practice project

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The distinctive contribution of higher education to preparing teachers for inclusive education<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Overview

Criticisms of the ways in which teachers are prepared to deal with diversity and learning difficulties are two-fold. One view holds that there is a specific body of knowledge and a set of skills for working with ‘special’ children and that initial teacher education courses do not adequately cover these matters. The second claims that because inclusion is not only about ‘special’ pupils, teacher education should focus on improving teaching and learning and should help beginning teachers to reduce the barriers to learning and participation of *all* pupils. Both these views are right to an extent, but each response has proved insufficient as teachers frequently report that they are not adequately prepared for the demands of inclusive education.



In many parts of the world, initial teacher education modules, courses or inputs on additional needs, multicultural education and ‘inclusion’ are offered as optional extras, available only to some students. Even in countries where these options are required, courses tend to focus on the characteristics of particular learners or groups, specialist teaching strategies and the prevailing policy context. The main problem is that the content knowledge of these courses is often not well integrated into the broader curriculum and pedagogical practices of mainstream

classroom settings. On courses where input on inclusion is ‘infused’ across all course elements, the coverage is limited, and tends to reinforce the view that the education of pupils identified as having difficulties in learning is the primary responsibility of specialists rather than class teachers with the support of specialists.

This case study reports on key aspects of Scotland’s Inclusive Practice Project (IPP) and describes a curricular approach to initial teacher education reform intended to prepare primary and secondary class teachers to enter a profession in which they take responsibility for the learning and achievement of all learners. The IPP was funded by the Scottish Government (2006–10) in response to concerns about persistent underachievement in school, particularly with regard to pupils with additional support needs such as dyslexia.

The IPP approach began with the view that there was a need to change current thinking about inclusive education as providing something ‘additional to’ or ‘different from’ that which is ‘otherwise available’ to others of similar age in mainstream schools. This position was based on the view that the central task in preparing new teachers is not to defend the need to accommodate learner differences, but to challenge assumptions about the adequacy of what is ‘otherwise available’ to the majority of learners. Building upon insights that were generated by research on how some teachers are able to be both effective and inclusive, it was argued that many of the current assumptions,

<sup>1</sup> This case study is drawn from: M. Rouse and L. Florian (2012) *Inclusive Practice Project: Final report*. Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen School of Education.

systems and procedures for providing for all students, by differentiating for some, could be replaced by new ways of thinking and working.

## 5.2 Aims and objectives

A grant from the Scottish Government to the University of Aberdeen School of Education supported the development of a new approach to preparing mainstream classroom to ensure that they:

- have a greater awareness and understanding of the educational and social problems/issues that can affect children's learning; and
- have developed strategies they can use to support and deal with such difficulties.

In accepting the challenge set by these objectives, the IPP adopted the position that inclusive education should not be thought of as a denial of individual differences, but as an accommodation of them, within the structures and processes that are available to all learners. In other words, it should be a normal part of a school's response when pupils experience difficulties. The project team embraced the view that all learners are not the same and human difference should not be ignored or denied. The alternative idea of extending what is 'generally available' was generated by studies of experienced teachers which showed that the need to provide support that is 'different from' or 'additional to' that which is otherwise available could be reduced by extending what was generally available to all (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011).

## 5.3 Activity

A process of consultation between university staff and teachers, former graduates, representatives from local authorities and teacher unions, about the development of a new approach to teacher education that would meet the project objectives, led to the identification of the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) as the site for the IPP research and development activities.

As with many other PGDE courses, the Aberdeen PGDE consists of distinct but integrated courses that cohere around a set of programme aims. Half the programme (18 weeks) is spent in school-experience placements; the other 18 weeks consist of university-based learning. The courses incorporate professional and theoretical knowledge as well as skills in research and reflection and are designed to support students to engage in critical and reflective practice to help them make sense of their experiences in schools.

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"University-based teacher education has an important role to play in ensuring that mainstream class teachers are prepared to deal with human differences in ways that include rather than exclude pupils from the culture, curricula and community of mainstream schools."

Wilson

The PGDE Professional Studies course was considered an ideal site for the IPP reform because it covered issues common to all primary and secondary student teachers as developing professionals with an emphasis on those which have implications for direct action in the classroom such as creating an inclusive environment for learning. Professional Studies became the 'spine' of the new programme and was used to promote the key messages and underpinning principles that emerged from the course development work in relation to the aims of the IPP.

As the course team began thinking about how the principles that were emerging from the development work could be incorporated into the PGDE programme, it became clear that decisions would have to be made about what beginning teachers would need to know and be able to do, within a framework of values and beliefs about social justice, educational rights and inclusion. The outcome of this debate formed the content of three core units that formed the Professional Studies course (see below). Two books, *Learning without limits* (Hart, Dixon, Drummond and McIntyre 2004) and *Achievement and inclusion in schools* (Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse 2007), were among the key texts chosen for the course.



## Outline content of core units of IPP Professional Studies course

### 1 Understanding learning including:

- understanding socio-cultural perspectives on learning;
- replacing 'bell-curve' thinking with the notion of 'transformability';
- considering issues relating to educational and emotional literacies.

### 2 Understanding social justice including:

- considering dilemmas of access and equity in education
- examining the role of 'additional support'

### 3 Becoming an active professional including:

- developing autonomy and resourcefulness, practical and ethical responsibility
- emphasising teacher responsibility to look for new ways of working by working with and through others

The PGDE was structured so that primary and secondary student teachers were taught Professional Studies courses together, while curriculum courses were organised by phase and subject. The rationale for combining primary and secondary student teachers was based on the assumption that student teachers have much to offer and learn from each other. It was also intended to model collaborative working across sectors and to engage student teachers in a lived experience of cross-sectorial collaboration as well a strategy to disrupt preconceived ideas about teaching at different phases. The emphasis on working with others was considered important because of the increase in numbers and range of adults other than teachers working to support pupils in schools. The idea was to build confidence and broaden the student teachers' repertoire of skills and strategies, including collaborative ways of working with others.

Given the contested nature of the concept of inclusion and the many interpretations of inclusion as practice, it was assumed that student teachers would inevitably encounter a wide range of experiences and situations during school placements. Therefore the university-based experiences were structured to support students in acquiring a critical view of practice without criticising the practice they observed or experienced. To this end, a reflective problem-solving approach was considered essential in helping student teachers think pedagogically about different responses to the difficulties children experienced in learning.

The IPP was both a development and a research project. It involved a complex process of elaborating, embedding and simultaneously researching selected aspects of the project, while also continuing to study and learn from the practices of classroom teachers committed to inclusive practice. In light of the contested nature of inclusive education and with previous teacher education reform efforts in mind, the IPP team designed a research strategy that would capture how teacher educators engaged with a complex reform process that involved changes that were both practical (e.g. structural reforms to the course) and theoretical (embedding inclusive pedagogical approaches into the course content). The research consisted of four areas of study which focused on: (1) the course reforms; (2) teacher educators' professional development; (3) surveys of students' attitudes towards inclusion; and (4) a follow-up study of course graduates. Further details of these studies are available in the final report of the project (Rouse and Florian 2012).

## 5.4 Outcome

A series of key findings emerged from the IPP research. These included the following headlines:

- Building upon and making links with current practices in school in ways that respect and yet challenge them is an essential aspect of university–school partnership in teacher education;
- University-based teacher education has an important role to play in ensuring that mainstream class teachers are prepared to deal with human differences in ways that include rather than exclude pupils from the culture, curricula and community of mainstream schools. But teacher educators may feel uncomfortable being asked to educate teachers in ways they themselves have not worked. Therefore consideration should be given to the professional development needs of teacher educators;
- It is important for teacher educators to reflect on their assumptions about human abilities and diversity as well as how these beliefs are communicated in initial teacher education and continuing professional development. Systematic research on this topic is also needed;
- Schools and classrooms vary in the extent to which inclusion is seen as an important aspect of practice. As a result it is important for student teachers to learn to negotiate their way through potentially difficult professional situations. This requires an emphasis in teacher education on working with other adults as well as developing the skills of reflective practice, critical thinking and using evidence from their teaching to inform decision-making.

## 5.5 Impact

The IPP adopted an approach to initial teacher education based on the idea that a child's capacity to learn is not fixed but can be enhanced based on what teachers do today. A key aspect of this approach was to think of inclusive teaching as making a range of opportunities available to everyone in the classroom so that all children can participate in learning activities. In this way, individual needs can be catered for but individual pupils are not singled out as being 'less able' or different. The follow up study of programme graduates confirmed that the approach was helpful to newly qualified teachers. Programme graduates reported that the course provided a framework for supporting the development of inclusive practice in the classroom. Observations of their practice supported this claim.

## 5.6 Next steps/conclusion

- The reform of initial teacher education is only the first step in building a profession that accepts the responsibility for enhancing the learning of all pupils; substantial professional development for teachers and teacher educators is also required;
- New opportunities for what can be achieved within teacher education, as well as what might be achieved by student teachers as they become teachers, are opened up by an increasing capacity to articulate why, how and what is pedagogically significant to inclusive practice;
- A deeper understanding of the theoretical principles and practical approaches that underpin inclusive pedagogy, where the classroom teacher accepts responsibility for all learners, should be central to all programmes of teacher education;
- In order to build inclusive pedagogical approaches, it is helpful to suspend judgements about the practices associated with other, perhaps less inclusive approaches, rather than seeing them as problems. Articulating and debating what is pedagogically significant, and why it is significant, with colleague teacher educators is likely to strengthen the involvement of staff and the sustainability of reform.

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